

Inside and outside climate talks, youths are urging faster action; Thunberg describes the UN climate talks in Glasgow as 'a failure'

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Body

Young people both inside and outside of the United Nations climate talks are telling world leaders to hurry up and get it done, that concrete measures to avoid catastrophic warming can't wait.

Ashley Lashley, a 22-year-old from Barbados who is on her country's climate negotiation team in Glasgow, thought about how to communicate the need for urgency during a session on carbon trading.

As she listened to other delegates debate the intricate and intractable topic that has baffled negotiators for more than six years, a phrase popped into her head: "blah-blah-blah."

That's the expression prominent teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg has started repeating to express her thoughts on the pace of government actions to curb global warming. The Thunberg-inspired Fridays for Future movement held a demonstration outside the conference venue to pressure the negotiators inside, drawing tens of thousands of participants.

And inside, the session Lashley attended droned on. She worries her fellow negotiators too easily become bogged down in minutiae and lose sight of the big picture: keeping emissions from exceeding 1.5 C, which could wipe out some island nations and other vulnerable spots.

Friday was the day the UN conference said it was dedicating to youth.

But the schedule didn't reflect that, at times: a news conference where officials talked about youth had a panel with no members under 30, and the lunchtime events featured former U.S. vice-president Al Gore, 73, and 77-year-old John Kerry, the U.S. climate envoy.

"When I arrived at COP26, I could only see white middle-aged men in suits," Magali Cho Lin Wing, 17, a member of the UNICEF U.K.

Youth Advisory Board, said at a press event.

"And I thought, 'Hold on, is this a climate conference or some corporate event? Is this what you came for? To swap business cards?'"

And except on rare occasions, young people say they are not being listened to.

"It's our future. Our future is being negotiated, and we don't have a seat at the table," said 20-year-old Boston College student Julia Horchos, who is inside the conference, but hasn't gotten into negotiating sessions.

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Still, they know it's important to be at least near the room where it all happens.

"It's my life," Horchos said. "Its definitely my responsibility to step up."

Greenpeace International Executive Director Jennifer Morgan gave the conference participants and activists under 30 credit.

"Youth have brought critical urgency to the talks," Greenpeace International executive director Jennifer Morgan said. "They have emphasized what is at stake for young people if the gap to 1.5 C is not closed."

Speaking at the Friday rally outside the conference venue, Greta Thunberg branded the UN climate talks in Glasgow so far "a failure," accusing leaders of actively creating loopholes in the rules and giving misleading pictures of their countries' emissions

The Fridays for Future protest was part of a series of demonstrations being staged around the world Friday and Saturday, to coincide with the Glasgow talks.

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